

MIDDAY EXPRESS

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Monkey Pox virus: Commission bans the import prairie dogs and rodents that could carry the disease

The Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCFCAH) agreed unanimously to ban the import of prairie dogs (*Cynomys sp.*) from the USA and rodents of non domestic species and squirrels from Sub Saharan Africa because of the risks of monkey pox disease. The decision will now soon be adopted by the European Commission. Monkey pox is an animal disease which is not present in the European Union. In human beings the disease is usually mild but the clinical symptoms may evoke chicken pox or small pox. The presence of the disease has been confirmed in prairie dogs in certain parts of the USA. The information available cannot exclude the possibility that contamination of prairie dogs is linked to contacts with rodents of non domestic species (Gambian rat) imported from Africa where the disease is endemic. The known reservoirs in the endemic zone are squirrels and rodents of non domestic species in the African rain forest. Despite the name of the disease, monkeys and primates are infected accidentally through direct or close contact with infected reservoir hosts. The SCFCAH concluded that it is appropriate to take measures to ban the import of prairie dogs from the USA and reservoir species from the endemic zone.

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